Awakening Loops

By: Ungulateman

The Fire Emblem universe, formerly the stablest on Yggdrassil, plunges into the Infinite Loops. Witness the impacts this has on the Shepherds and the other denizens of the Loops. Based on Innortal's and Spacebattle's time loops, set in the universe of Fire Emblem: Awakening.

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Chapter 1

Fire Emblem, traditionally, had been the stablest Loop in all of Yggdrassil. Something in the deep-rooted code of that universe made it just about impregnable; only a handful of Fused Loops have ever been spotted, and even then the most aggressive attempts to change the patterns of the Loop barely created a blip.

Naruto replacing Eliwood and defeating the Black Fang in a ramen-eating contest? Didn't change a jot of history. Ranma (in place of Ike) literally atomizing Ashnard with one punch? Events thereafter went unchanged. Avatar Aang purging Jugdral of Loptyr's spirit? That didn't do anything. Not even Shinji's EVA-fuelled rampage across Archanea, ostensibly as Prince Marth, impacted the Loop for long.

At this point, the admins threw up their hands, shrugged their shoulders, and put it down as another mystery of the World Tree. The Loop continued to expand at a slow pace, years of history ticking past in subjective eons for those outside the universe. Other universes continued to produce Fire Emblem fiction, all part of Yggdrassil's backup files.

Then one day in the hub world, *Fire Emblem: Awakening* was published, and the chlorophyll hit the fan.

"Give me a situation report," Nidhogg calmly hissed, the Head Administrator (Reptilian Division) slithering around the monitoring station.

"We got two baseline Loops before the entire system hung up," replied Bahamut, the proud metallic dragon all business. "Problem is, they're *different* . There's no Anchor to alter things consciously, and this universe doesn't have quantum uncertainty programmed into it. We're seeing instability in the most stable Loop in the tree, with no explanation."

The Serpent Under the Tree groaned. "Give me a quick rundown of the baselines and where they differ."

Tiamat weighed in, her five heads flicking across an equal number of screens filled with information. "First Loop was, well, let's call it the Bad Ending. The prince is mortally wounded, the queen is killed, there's a massive series of wars, then an eldritch abomination is resurrected and destroys mankind."

Nidhogg blinked in shock. "This is Fire Emblem. That's not a bad ending, that's *game over* . How can that be a baseline?"

Bahamut pinched the bridge of his snout with his claws, sighing. "Time travel."

A collective groan rose from all three of the draconic system admins.

"The prince's future daughter travels back in time from this baseline and creates the divergence point that leads to the other," Tiamat continued. "She prevents the queen from being killed, the wars in question are a lot smaller and shorter, and they manage to stop the resurrection of aforementioned eldritch abomination."

"Wonderful," the head administrator grunted. "And I suppose the system crashed because the Loop was utterly unprepared for something as massively destabilizing as time travel."

"That's what it looks like. We need an Anchor, but thankfully we have a perfect candidate for it. His name is Robin - wait, what!?"

The administrators turned as the diagnostic charts began to flow and various alarms started wailing. "The universe is self-anchoring? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?" Nidhogg yelled, serpentine eyes flickering over the readout.

"I have no idea!" Bahamut shouted back. "But I imagine time travel has something to do with it!"

Loops begin and end abruptly, as all experienced Loopers know. The moment of entering a new Loop is known as "Awakening", in a thoroughly amusing coincidence that Lucina had no knowledge of or time to appreciate when she did so for the first time.

The four gemstones and the Fire Emblem lay before her; Gules had been lost, some time in her world's past. Naga gazed down on her compassionately, the Divine Dragon preparing to return her and her companions to the past, to avert the dark future the Fell Dragon Grima had brought upon them.

But…she had already done this. She had journeyed into the past, rescued her father, altered the flow of time, and prevented the rise of Grima. Why was she here, *again* ?

"N-Naga," she stammered, the idea of all her work being undone beginning to hit home, "Did you grant me a…a premonition of sorts?"

The Divine Dragon, no more the dragon of her namesake than the human she appeared to be, regarded her kindly. "No, Awakener," she replied, her ethereal voice echoing through the room. "Apart from your sudden pause, nothing has changed. I understand if you fear failure; but do not allow it to overwhelm you."

"I won't." She knew one thing; she had done this before. She could do it again. Her friends had made their way into the past already, Naga guiding them to the times and places they would best fulfil their goals. She would not let them down. "I am ready," she finished.

Naga closed her eyes and began to gently glow, the power of the incomplete Emblem fuelling the magic she used. Lucina stood resolute, her unflinching expression hiding her deep-seated relief.

I don't have to kill him. I know that, now. We can live in peace…we can live our lives together.

As she donned her mask and entered the light, she smiled more sweetly than she had in a very long time.

This time, the Risen didn't stand a chance. There was no need for dangerous antics to rescue her aunt; the undead abominations simply died before they could reach Lissa, her blade biting through their foul bodies and rendering them into inky smoke. Her father - gods, her father - was as strong and vibrant as her premonition, and while it pained her to hide from him, she forced herself to stay aloof, knowing the truth would be nothing but madness, here and now.

He was there, too. The amnesiac tactician. The loving husband. The caring father. The avatar of the Fell Dragon, Grima. Robin. She hated hiding from him like this, the pain almost as bad as hiding from her own father. But he didn't know her, not yet, and she didn't truly know him; it was all a dream, the dream she was determined to make real.

"You may call me Marth," she managed to force out, the necessary lie burning in her mouth.

"After the hero-king of old? At any rate, thank you for saving my sister, Marth," Chrom said, and the strong reassuring voice of her father made her want nothing more but to embrace him and weep, like she had on that fateful evening what felt like forever from now. She shook away the feeling, finding it harder and harder to distinguish her dreams from reality. It had felt so *real* .

"The world is teetering on the precipice of disaster. What you saw tonight was but a prelude," she recited, remembering what she'd said in that other life, false or not. She walked away then, leaving them to puzzle over her meaning.

She didn't notice she had been followed for some time. She turned back to face a white-haired man she'd dreamt of for all those years, deep brown eyes filled with conflict and confusion. Robin brought a hand up to her mask, and she let him, not daring to hope that…

Then the floor fell out from under her when he whispered one little word. " *Lucina…?"*

"Robin!" she shouted back, fiercely embracing her lover. *Sometimes, the gods are good* , she thought.

She didn't notice the dagger-like blade of lightning inside of her until she was already falling towards the forest floor, the world fading away as the Fell Dragon's laughter forced its way out of Robin's mouth as his eyes narrowed to pinpricks of fear and horror.

Lucina's second Awakening was with a scream, startling Naga greatly.

"Awakener! What is wrong?" she asked, worry giving her voice an odd inflection.

Lucina gasped and panted for air, her mind telling her she should be sweating and exhausted, yet her body was as fresh and ready as it had been before…

Before she had returned to the past, before she had embraced *Grima* , before…

" *Lucina…* "

Robin had experienced the premonition, too; how else would he know her name? She recalled Grima's words, from that fateful encounter on the Dragon's Table.

" *I attempted to reclaim my host, but he was not ready. Instead, he was stripped of his memories, and I* misplaced *some of my infinite power. But that has changed now…* "

The premonition must have restored Robin's memories, she deduced, the seeds of fear beginning to take root in her. And that allowed the Fell Dragon to possess him - if not enough to ascend once more, than enough to control him, and kill her with her guard down. But if that was the case, why was she here once more?

Grima is tormenting me , she realised. *He wishes to break me with this torture, to endlessly repeat my failures. But I will not let him. I will do what I must to succeed, no matter how long it takes.*

"I am fine," she answered, her breathing returning to normal. "And I am ready."

Naga's concerned expression softened, the Divine Dragon accepting her words at face value. "If you insist, Awakener. Prepare yourself."

Lucina was utterly confused by the latest turn of events. This time, Robin had not recognised her, and hadn't followed her into the forest after she left. Surreptitiously following her father and his friends, she came to the inescapable conclusion that this Robin had not seen the premonition.

Perhaps this was not some trick of Grima's, but rather some mistake with Naga's ritual. Altering time itself would surely have strange consequences if something went wrong; could she perhaps be trapped in an endless repetition of her journey, with respite coming only from success? Perhaps Robin didn't always remember the premonition; and when he didn't, he was not a pawn of the Fell Dragon.

Hope stirred within her breast at the thought; Grima had not claimed Robin this time. When the time came, the Fell Dragon would fail, they would truly win, and they could be together once more.

Once more . The thought raised doubts that chilled her to the bone. Could it be that this was not her Robin? That this was another Robin? What right did she have to make him love her again? Was it wrong to use her knowledge of the future, just to feel his love again? Trying to withhold tears, she sprinted away, following her past life's experience to find shelter on the way to Ylisstol.

Hiding in a barn on the outskirts of the city, she slept dreamlessly, for she had no one to dream for.

She fought by his side at Emmeryn's attempted assassination, magic and blade in hand. Validar - this world's Validar, not the inhumanly powerful monster that they had faced at the Dragon's Table - fell, slain by her father's hand, and the remaining Grimleal and mercenaries scattered before the guards could arrive.

She left, too, not wanting to attract her father's attention. As she made to leave the castle, though, a white-haired man found her. Those deep brown eyes studied her, seeming to look right through her mask. "Marth."

"Robin," she replied coldly, desperately trying to stay impassionate. As she spoke his name, it was like the sun rising, and his eyes filled with intelligence and light. Gritting his teeth and scrunching up his face, he groaned in pain, intensely focused on an internal conflict she barely understood. Even as he did so, he threw his weapons to the ground, including the knife from his boot she knew he kept 'for emergencies'. "Robin?" she asked, losing her false voice as concern overrode her caution. "Robin! Answer me!"

"L-Lucina…" he mumbled in response. "When I'm awake…so is Grima. I-I managed to erase my memories again, but when you said my name, my real name…agh-" he doubled over from the pain as he spoke. "I'm fighting him, Lucy…but I-I need you, and I need Falchion…"

Fumbling at her waist, she drew her sacred blade, the Divine Dragon's fang, and its blue glow was as intense as the sun. "L-lay it in m-my palm, Lucy," he panted, face etched in pain. As she did so, he clutched one hand tightly around the blade, and the other in the palm of her hand. The azure light intensified, the Mark of Grima on Robin's hand burnt a virulent purple, and he screamed loud and long.

Eventually, after what felt like an eternity of her lover's pain, Robin crumpled to the ground, hand emanating purple smoke. His eyes were wide, his breathing was hard, but the Brand of the Fell Dragon,

the symbol of Grima's hold over him, was finally erased. She pulled him to her feet, but when he moved to embrace her, she recoiled, panic on her face.

His face fell as he remembered what happened, and he dropped his arms, looking down to his feet. "Oh. I'm sorry, Lucy. I've just been through so much...I'd forgotten how recent that was for you."

She blinked in confusion. "I'm sorry, too, Robin, but I don't understand."

He smiled wanly, offering his newly Brandless hand to her, which she took gingerly. "The whole story is unbelievable, Lucina. But you're a very smart woman, so I know you can handle it, when the time comes."

Bahamut and Tiamat merely exchanged shocked glances at each other as they continued to observe.

"Robin just severed himself from Grima."

"He can do that?"

"It's the invisible ties he likes talking about. He used Falchion's magic to sever the tie between him and Grima."

"So which one of them is the Anchor now?"

"It's him; Grima Looping with Robin was always an unexpected side-effect. I think he'll still Loop, but nowhere near as often, thankfully."

"Why are you so happy the most important dragon in this Loop won't be Awake for most of it?"

"Because he's a jerk, that's why."

His tale was harrowing. With free reign of Robin's mind from the beginning, Grima could manipulate events on a massive scale all across Ylisse and beyond. Sometimes it would leave him with the tiniest shred of hope, some perceived flaw in his plan that could be exploited, only to crush it mercilessly at the last moment.

And yet, every time he failed to stop the Fell Dragon, every time the world drowned in darkness and faded into oblivion, he would awake once more in that empty field, a puppet of Grima once more. Dozens, scores of times, the world fell apart, but only he and Grima remembered it.

Until, one day upon waking up, Chrom simply pierced his heart with Falchion, a painful mixture of anguish and hatred on his face.

Chrom had begun remembering it, too. The last time had been one of the Fell Dragon's *creative* endings, where the Ylissean royal family had suffered even more than usual. And Grima had been wearing Robin's face the entire time. (Robin, for that matter, had been wearing Emmeryn's face, but in a very different way.)

Little did her father know that action had saved an entire universe. Even with its power sealed, Falchion proved enough to free Robin from his bodily prison, enough to fight back against Grima if only a little. Then, he set his master plan into action.

Robin had discovered that people's memories would come and go like the tide; one life, the 'real Chrom' would be there, ready to put him down, and in another, he was unaware of all that had transpired. He cried as he talked of the many 'false' Lucinas he'd seen Grima murder, torture and inflict all matter of unspeakable things upon, the Fell Dragon aware of their connection yet unable to grasp what their love truly meant.

The plan was that he would erase his own memories, with the cure being Lucina saying his true name. Taking up the title 'Rufure', he fought the Fell Dragon as he had the first time over and over again, unaware of his true self. When the real Lucina appeared again, she

could use the partially awakened Falchion of her time to destroy Grima's connection fully, freeing him from his endless nightmare.

"Robin…" she whispered, all out of tears as she embraced him wholeheartedly. "I am so, so sorry."

"It's not your fault, Lucy," he said quietly back.

Many long, hard battles later…

An Awake Grima stood before them upon the Fell Dragon's back, gritting its human form's teeth in frustration. "I could not *prevent* your pathetic human bonds from forming," it hissed, "so I will merely *destroy* them instead!" Sweeping out a hand to unleash a wave of dark magic, Robin immediately recognised it from one of his previous lives, decided on one of his four counter-strategies, and executed it before it even left Grima's hands.

The Veil of Discord, as it had been named, merely rolled around the Shepherds like water around a rock, shining silver cords tying them to each other. Even the faintest, silk-like bonds held firm, and the thickest, metallic ties, like the one between he and Lucina, actively repelled the sorcery.

"Shepherds!" he yelled over the din of the Fell Dragon's flight, "our invisible ties are invisible no longer! While we stand together, the Fell Dragon perishes, here and now!"

He, Chrom and Lucina stepped forward, drawing their swords in unison. "Shepherds! For a brighter future!"

Endless tides of Risen poured from weeping sores dotted along Grima's back, but the Shepherds held firm, axe, blade, spear and tome defiant in the face of overwhelming odds. The three leaders stepped forward to challenge Grima itself, cutting down any Grimleal or undead foolish enough to bar their path.

"Your end has come, Grima!" Chrom began, shouting over the whistling wind and the sounds of battle.

"Foolish mortal - I *am* the end!" it spat in return. "And as for you, *princess* ...your future cannot be averted. All will drown in shadow. It is not fate; it is my will! And my will is LAW!"

Lucina closed her eyes and raised her Falchion high, feeling the Divine Dragon's power flowing through it into her. Opening them again, she met Grima's stare evenly, refusing to cower or flinch. "My will is to see you slain, here and now. And my will is *stronger* , Grima."

Robin didn't say anything; the tome he wielded was statement enough. The Book of Naga burned with a fierce blue energy, seeming to suffuse the entire area with radiant light. Then, at last, he spoke, far too quietly to hear over the clash of blades and screams of the dying, yet he was heard all across Grima's back.

"It matters not how strait the gate,

Or charged with punishment the scroll."

He narrowed those deep brown eyes once more, meeting his doppelganger's gaze much the same way as his lover had.

"I am the master of my fate."

Channeling the intense, holy power of the sacred tome he wielded, Robin's body began to shine, the conflict of Fell Dragon blood and Divine Dragon magic emerging spectacularly, sending arcs of light whipping across Grima's back.

" *I am the captain of my soul.* "

"I don't care, Sleipnir, these two deserve it. Make it happen."

"Alright, fine, Nidhogg. But you owe me."

Lucina Awoke for the third time in an unfamiliar place. Attempting to get on her feet, she fell forward, suddenly finding her centre of gravity completely thrown off. Getting up on all fours, she blinked as she examined her leg. There was a hoof on the end.

When the door swung open and a purple unicorn with wings and colourful, stripy hair walked in, she just started screaming, falling back onto the ground. It just winced, seemingly used to this reaction. "Uh, do you need any help, miss…?"

Lucina started in shock. "You can *talk* ? I am a *horse* and I am talking to a *talking pegasus with a horn* . What is going on!?" she snapped, utterly confused.

Rubbing her forehead with a hoof, the horned-pegasus-slash-winged-unicorn sighed. "I'm Princess Twilight Sparkle. I am the Anchor for the Equis Loops. What's your name?"

She was talking with a *pega-pony-princess.* Utterly lost, Lucina decided her best chance to find anything out was to play along. "I am Princess Lucina of Ylisse. I don't know what an Anchor or a Loop is, though I have suspicions about the latter."

"You're a princess as well? Interesting." Nodding along, Twilight continued. "Well, have you been repeating certain unique events recently, or have other people told you about things happening repeatedly that shouldn't?"

"Yes. This is my third or fourth time, I believe, but my husband has had it happen dozens of times." She sighed, looking down and wondering where Robin was now.

"Oh, it sounds like your husband is the Anchor, then. A Loop, in simple terms, is this repeating you've been doing. The Anchor is one person in a Loop who is always aware of what is happening - who is

Awake, as most people put it. People who are closer to the Anchor are more likely to be Awake, so I suppose you must be a relatively new Loop to have only Looped three or four times as his wife."

"I see." She didn't, of course, but she was beginning to grasp at least some of what was going on. "Why am I a horse?" she asked next.

"This is what's called a Fused Loop, where people from one group of Loops cross over into another. I imagine your husband, the Anchor, is somewhere here as well - I've never heard of a Fused Loop without the Anchor involved."

Inspiration struck, and Lucina managed to shakily stand in her new quadrupedal stance. "Do you have any empty fields around here?"

"Empty fields? Sweet Apple Acres has some fallow developing right now. Why?"

"Chrom, we have to do *something* ."

"What do you propose we do?"

"I…I don't know…"

Robin half-sighed, half-groaned at the all-too-familiar sound of Chrom and Lissa waking him up in that all-too-familiar field. They sounded a little off, but they were still recognisable. Then he opened his eyes to see a pale pink horse (though no horse had such human facial features, or a mane with such human-like hair) with a long blue mane and the Brand of the Exalt in one eye.

"Hey, girl," he cooed quietly. "Do you know where Chrom and Lissa are?"

Neigh , said the horse.

"Huh." Attempting to find his feet, Robin was shocked to find himself behooved and furclad, a pale white mane hanging into his eyes over his peach-coloured fur. His quick-thinking mind came to a 'logical' conclusion remarkably fast.

"Lucina, why are we horses?"

The Lucina-horse giggled her familiar giggle. "I nearly had you, didn't I? I thought impersonating Chrom and Lissa was a nice touch."

Robin simply laughed back, allowing himself to be pulled up and managing to stay on four feet well enough. "In all seriousness, though, I meant that. Why are we horses?"

She tossed her head in the direction of the bright purple pega-pony-princess. "This is what everyone looks like here, according to her. Apparently other places have been repeating themselves, as well. She says you are an 'Anchor', so you always remember when time loops around. She's this world's Anchor. They seem to be better off than us, though."

The winged unicorn cleared its throat before replying. "My name's Twilight Sparkle, Anchor of Equestria. Equestria is rather lucky, actually. Many Loops are quite bad, at least without Loopers intervening. We've made Equestria into a sanctuary loop because of that, so people who come here can relax. If you want to help out, we're more than happy to accept it, but it's also fine if you just want to spend some time doing nothing, for once."

Lucina nuzzled up to him, running an equine nose through his mane. "We never had a honeymoon, did we? Not even in the real timeline."

He shook his head. "Not while we're horses, Lucy, please."

"I can fix that," the horned pegasus offered. "But, unfortunately, the only tailor around here who can produce human clothing is replacing one of you in your Loops, so you'd both be naked for a while. Ponies

don't wear much clothing, but I know humans have a pretty big nudity taboo."

Lucina frowned. "Replacing us?"

"Ah. Fused Loops work both ways sometimes. If my senses are right, you're replacing one of my friends, the tailor, and her husband, my assistant at the library."

Princess Rarity of Ylisse reclined on a luxurious lounge chair in the destroyed future, being fed grapes by a very awkward-looking Risen. "Oh, Spike, this is *wonderful* . An entire world, just for the two of us."

The sky-scrapingly massive dragon abomination was decidedly more purple and green than it had been, and its avatar was unusually reptilian despite its normal humanoid shape. "Only the best for you, Rarity."

"What in the gods' name is going on here!?" Severa shouted in the far distance.

"I'm sure they'll be fine," Twilight reassured them. "Anyway, I should give you the usual 'Welcome to the Loops' lecture. It's short, informative and will save you a lot of time."

At the end of her presentation, Robin nodded, having confirmed and invalidated a fair few theories of his. "Thank you for that, Twilight."

Lucina's eyes widened at the revelations she'd been privy to. "Incredible. I was aware of the Outrealms, and the many oddities they contain, but this is something beyond even that."

"You're welcome," the local Anchor replied. "If you need something, just drop by the library." Her smile turned mischievous. "Would you like me to return you to human before I go? If your Loop is anywhere

near as bad as it sounds, you lovebirds have a lot of catching up to do."

Lucina nodded estatically, and Robin's objections went unheard and unseen in a *pop* of magical energy and a burst of purple light.

Sighing in contentment, Lucina lay down in the grass once more, satisfied just to lie here with her husband, somewhere safe and peaceful. "One day," she mused, hearing Robin's heavy breathing hitch, "We can bring this peace to Ylisse. To the entire world. And then we can live in peace and harmony for the rest of our lives."

He took her hand in his, meeting her gaze in the empty field. "I don't know what the future holds," he recited. "But with you by my side, I'm going to cherish every moment." Tears of happiness in both of their eyes, they embraced once more, and the outside world faded away as they fell into one another once more.

Author's Note:

If you're not familiar with The Infinite Loops, then I recommend either their TVTropes page or the forums. If you don't like ponies, then don't worry; they're not going to see much screen time after this. If you do like them, good news: *MLP Loops* has got you covered.

On a more pragmatic note, yes, I now have three stories in progress. I *will* try to keep them updated, but in between starting university and my unreliable internet, I don't expect to post regularly. Sorry in advance to everyone who's been faving and following me!

Please, leave a review if you have anything to say!

Ungulateman

Chapter 2

"So," Chrom cautiously began, "the gist of what you're saying is that this world is just one of many."

"Yes. The Outrealms are different; there's Outrealms within our world, and then there are *other* worlds entirely." Robin's voice was patient, but tense.

Chrom winced, well aware of how long his friend had been trying to explain this to him. "Yeah, I know I took a while to get that. And something went wrong with the machine that keeps all our worlds running."

Robin nodded. "Yes. They call it Yggdrassil, the World Tree. It involves a lot of technology and magic even I don't understand."

Chrom made a funny little gesture that doesn't translate well to text. "So now they have most of the many worlds 'looping' in time, in order to try and fix what went wrong."

"Well, it's to stop it from getting any worse, rather than fix it, but yes."

"And sometimes these 'loops' meet up with each other, and different worlds can interact in different ways."

"That is indeed the case."

"And that's why I am a tiny horse and you two are lying naked in a field together."

"Yes!" Lucina replied cheerfully.

Chrom face-hoofed. "I need a drink."

Chrom smiled down at the flesh-coloured young mare he and Robin had found in a cave not far from Ponyville. She smiled back at him, her cobalt mane and deep brown eyes making it clear exactly who her parents were.

"My name is Chrom," he said, introducing himself to his granddaughter, "and apparently my special talent is finding amnesiacs."

It turned out that the Brands of the Exalt on his flanks were not, in fact, his cutie marks. It was bizarre, to say the least, to see a blank book appear over the top of them.

When they'd brought Morgan back into town, Twilight had immediately pulled them aside and politely asked if she could do some examinations on her - she had been lost in the wilderness for some time now, after all. The examinations were taking an unusually long time, and so Robin and Lucina sat outside the town library, waiting to hear from the local Anchor.

Lucina bit her lip, worry on her face. "What's going to happen to her?" she asked, a quaver to her voice.

Robin grabbed her in a reassuring hug, letting her rest her head in the nape of his neck. "Twilight said that children we have in the baseline will be fine, and that they can Loop." He frowned. "We had her in the future of the baseline…didn't we?"

"I don't know!" she snapped, then quietly started sobbing. "I just want my daughter to remember me," she whispered weakly. "I don't care about her old memories; I just want her to remember her new ones."

Robin's eyes hardened. "She will. I promise."

Tiamat looked over the urgent transmission from the Equine Division, a message from the Anchor of the Equis Loops. "What have we got

on this 'Morgan'?"

Bahamut flicked a claw idly through the list of the many, many residents of the Fire Emblem loop. "Morgan, daughter of Robin and, uh…" he trailed off into silence.

"Robin and *who* ?" Tiamat demanded, fire in her eyes (and ice, and poison, and lightning, and necromantic energy - it depended on which head you were looking at).

Bahamut gulped. "As cliché as it sounds…'it depends'. Morgan is *always* Robin's daughter, just like Lucina is *always* Chrom's."

"That's not helping."

He passed the sheet over to her to examine. "There's some seriously screwed up narrative causality in this universe. For the most part, mothers have the same children, no matter who their father is; but for Chrom and Lucina, and Robin and Morgan, it's *reversed* ."

"So the future children always have the same mothers - or fathers, in their case…"

"But their other parent could be *any* of the opposite-gender Shepherds."

Tiamat gulped this time, eliciting a short snort from her opposite number. "What happened to the pseudo-stable baseline?" she hissed.

"Well, this is part of the pseudo-stability, it seems. For all we know, it might have been the trigger for the pseudo-stability."

The Queen of Dragons started. "Of course! That's why this happened!"

"What?"

"Morgan - this Morgan at least - *was never meant to exist!* "

" *What!?* " Lucina screamed in anguish at Bahamut, Robin's grip the only thing preventing her from trying to tear him to pieces. " *She's my daughter! How dare you!?"*

Bahamut, here to inform the Loopers of the situation, held up his claws, trying to defuse the tension. "Please. Let me try to explain. It is *completely impossible* for your Morgan to exist in either baseline. In the first, Robin is not only old enough to be your father - not insurmountable, but creepy - but he also becomes the Fell Dragon before you reach child-bearing age."

"But we had Morgan in the second timeline, didn't we?" Robin spoke up, gently squeezing on his wife's shoulders to try and calm her down.

Bahamut shook his head. "You could have had a child, eventually, but it would not have been your Morgan. Think about it. If your Morgan was the child of that timeline, why would she have returned to the past? The only way to do that was Naga's ritual, which you had no need of and which she never revealed in that timeline. Our initial theory, that she was from an Outrealm, isn't true; the spatial-temporal coordinates don't match up.

Your Morgan *broke* the rules of causality. *She* is responsible for the Fire Emblem Loops."

"What…?" Lucina was no longer angry, merely shocked beyond belief. Tears started welling up in her eyes, and Robin felt himself begin to cry in response.

"This part is simpler," Bahamut said. "Morgan had to come from somewhere, and that place never existed in the baseline. Fire Emblem, in the past at least, was *incredibly* stable - it's not used to adapting to changes, it just ignores them and keeps going. Morgan's existence couldn't be ignored without totally destabilizing the

timeline, would have required *at least* one alternate universe, and the Loop wasn't capable of changing to fit. So it had to go into emergency mode, and that meant Loops."

Incidentally, that's why you were in the first Loop, Lucina," he explained as an aside. "Since you're the source of the instability, the system effectively did a diagnostics check by Awakening you."

Husband and wife slumped down onto the ground, clinging to each other for dear life. "W-What now?" Robin choked out. "How do we get our daughter back?"

Bahamut looked down on them as only an administrator of Yggdrassil can; with sympathy, but without a shred of false hope. "I'm sorry, Robin. Nidhogg is editing the baseline as we speak; you'll marry Cordelia, Lucina will marry Inigo, and none of this will have happened. The Loops are a mistake, and we're fixing them as best we can."

Even knowing it was futile, Robin beat his fists onto the Platinum Dragon's avatar for what felt like hours, screaming and cursing and pleading. Lucina almost hit him with the Falchion, but he simply dismissed the blade with his administrative powers, then paralysed her.

"I'm allowing *this* ," he gestured towards Robin, "because he needs to vent, and he can't hurt me. You, on the other hand, tried to chop my head off with a sword designed to kill dragons. It probably wouldn't kill *me* , but it's the principle of the thing."

Nidhogg sighed, hinging and unhinging his jaw, much like a mammalian admin would have smacked his lips together. Getting a coherent explanation of why the Loops had started and how they could fix them had taken longer than expected, but they were ready now.

Managing the pseudo-stable relationships of the baseline was a mess, but he figured out a quick and dirty fix: simply put an impenetrable mental block in Robin's mind that prevented him from marrying any of the time travellers. While he would have preferred him to always marry Cordelia - that killed at least two birds with one stone - any of the regular Shepherds would stabilise the timeline.

(" *That's enough."*)

Lucina's pseudo-stable relationship dynamics didn't even need altering after that; all her other suitors were fellow time travellers, and therefore their children were irrelevant. On a whim, he decided to fix that niggling bug that let her marry her cousin - how had *that* gotten past the testers?

As he busied himself with preventing incest in the royalty of Ylisse, he failed to notice some old programming mesh itself into Robin's mental block, opening up a little 'keyhole' to a place that never should have been.

"I'm sorry, Rufure! I know this is wrong…I know this is cold-blooded murder! But I have to do it, for the future! The Fell Dragon must be stopped!" Lucina shouted, Falchion raised and pointed at Robin's chest.

"…Alright. I accept your judgement, Lucina." Rufure held his head high, took a deep breath through his nose, and met her gaze. "I will lay down my life. For Ylisse. For the whole world." He closed his eyes and thought of his beloved Cordelia, and his darling daughters Severa and Morgan. "And for the ones I love."

"…Thank you, Rufure." Lucina said quietly. She stepped forward, and touched Falchion to his chest in order to line up a quick, clean blow. It began to glow with an azure light, and they both leaned forward the tiniest amount to examine it closer. Then it flashed a brilliant blue, a burning pain ran through Rufure's right hand, and everything went white.

When he woke up, it was like the sun rising. His eyes filled with love and light, and he stumbled backwards, falling over with an audible 'oof!' He…he *remembered* . So many memories spiralled through his mind, hundreds of lifetimes of pain and anguish, all so he could be with the woman who stood before him, sword in hand, as she covered her mouth in one hand as tears streaked down her face.

"Lucina…" he mumbled. "What did they *do* to you?"

He looked down at his chest, then back to the woman he loved. "What did they do to *me* ?"

(*"End executable file."*)

Nidhogg stared in disbelief as the baseline of the now read-only Fire Emblem Loops collapsed into instability once more, tongue absently sliding in and out to taste the air. " *Xylem* ."

Sleipnir nickered. "There's only one thing to do now."

The Serpent Under The Tree glanced at him. "What genius idea have you got now, son of Loki?"

A song began to well up in the background, and the pair got swept up in the power of Sleipnir's heart-song. (Tempo roughly similar to the Zazu sections of "I Just Can't Wait to be King".)

The only way that this will work

Is if you return their child!

Nidhogg scoffed, slithering around the eight prancing legs of his musical partner.

And what of the duties I'd have to shirk

To cower, be meek and mild?

Sleipnir started prodding the serpent in the nose as he sang.

There's precisely zip that you can do

If you refuse to bend!

Slapping his hoof away, Nidhogg snapped back.

Chlorophyll, Sleipnir, I'll prove to you

That this is *not my end!*

Sleipnir cast his gaze to the ceiling, pointing a pair of hooves.

You'd best hope the higher ups

will overlook this slight!

Rolling his eyes, Nidhogg coiled up around the equine Administrator to look him in the face.

They're all too deep in their cups

to notice *my horrible plight!*

Sleipnir gestured over towards the Loop as it played out on one of the many displays within the World Tree.

Why can't you accept that these two

They will always challenge fate?

Nidhogg huffed, turning the screen off as he slid over to fiddle with the machinery on the other side of the room.

I might as well just sit and stew

If I leave my work inchoate!

Sleipnir sidled up next to his fellow admin, eyes wide and soulful.

Be truthful, now, my dear Nidhogg,

You do enjoy these little Loops?

Harshly, Nidhogg snapped back with a lengthier reply as he continued to make changes.

I'm merely another little cog

I'm not jumping through any hoops!

I refuse to let these two

Dictate their terms to me

I'll resolve this situation through

The appropriate bureaucracy!

Satisfied, Nidhogg slithered away, leaving Sleipnir, alone and despondent, gazing at the darkened screen on which the Loop had been playing out. The heart-song, beginning to peter out without Nidhogg's cooperation, became slow and mournful.

And so the lovers fated ill

Will never see the light…

Instead their world, it will

Simply fade - into eternal night…

" *This really isn't my jurisdiction* ," the Rainbow Serpent hissed, glancing aside now and then, clearly uncomfortable with the situation. *"It never was, isn't now, and never will be."*

"I know, I know," Loki said, grumbling a little. "But my children need to be reasoned with, and they won't listen to me."

"Why don't you just smite them?" Zeus asked impatiently, thumbing a lightning bolt at his waist. "A good smiting always worked, back in the old days…"

"We're dealing with a Looper who is smarter than the local admin, and Nidhogg can't handle the blow to his ego," Loki replied. "Brute force doesn't solve anything here."

The trio of top-level administrators worked their way through Yggdrassil, towards the problematic Loop in question. Various demigods, minor deities and incarnations scrambled to clear the way, not wanting to provoke their ire.

Bahamut and Tiamat inclined their heads respectfully, stepping aside to allow their superiors to examine the Loop for themselves. Nidhogg was elsewhere; *someone* had let Lina Inverse into one of his universes again.

Zeus and Loki spoke in low murmurs as they worked, while the Rainbow Serpent, not restricted by mundane limitations like time and space, sat and absorbed the situation.

(Delving through the fabric of the universe, it made the alterations it needed here and there.)

After a tense few minutes, Loki turned around, immediately drawing the local administrators' attention. "It's been resolved. Monitor it for twenty-four hours, set it to read-only, then we can have you reassigned."

They left, leaving a trail of confusion and paperwork behind them.

Zeus cleared his throat. "I'm personally impressed at how well these two handled the situation; much better than Nidhogg, at any rate."

Loki nodded back. "He was always more of a programmer, as strange as it may seem. That's what made me so confused; his fixes were completely inadequate to the task."

The Rainbow Serpent's tongue flickered, but it said nothing. (Everything that needed to be said had been said.)

Darkness. Confusion. Then, a pair of voices.

"Chrom, we have to do *something* ."

"What do you propose we do?"

"I…I don't know…"

Sunlight. A blue sky. A pair of strangely familiar faces.

"I see you're awake now."

"Hey there!"

"There are better places to take a nap than on the ground, you know."

Beautiful cobalt hair. The Brand of the Exalt. Faint memories of a love pure and strong.

"Here, let me help you up."

She took Chrom's hand (his name was Chrom…wasn't it?), and he pulled her up, with a smile on her face.

Bahamut and Tiamat's six mouths were all agape as they witnessed the new Loop play out. "No way," the Platinum Dragon began weakly, "There is no way they can do that."

Tiamat shook her quintet of heads sadly. "They can, unfortunately. Robin is incredibly pseudo-stable; even changing his gender in the baseline won't break the timeline."

"I didn't mean that. I mean, this is morally repugnant. They erase a Looper's memory, change his gender *in the baseline* , then walk away, pretending it's a solution."

The Queen of Dragons shrugged helplessly. "I don't see what we can do."

"I don't know either." Bahamut flopped down onto his hoard (or as most admins would call it, a beanbag). "Come on. Twenty-four hours of this *chlorophyll* , then we can go back to the Forgotten Realms or some other Loop that doesn't keep imploding on us."

"Father!" Morgan cried out as he ran to embrace Chrom, suddenly leaving a strange coldness at Robin's side. Her son was so beautiful, just like her daughter. Why did she feel this sudden chill? What was going on? Why did that cry of "Father!" touch her so *deeply* ?

(An incomprehensibly powerful being uncoiled in front of Robin, the Rainbow Serpent's stare boring into her soul. " *Remember* ." The creature vanished with equal suddenness, and Robin stumbled, her head splitting in sudden agony.)

She…Robin looked up to her family, down at herself, and crumpled into unconsciousness.

She opened her eyes, and both of the faces she saw bore the Brand in opposite eyes.

"Mother?" they said in unison, perfectly mirrored expressions of worry, and she smiled wanly, her heart shattering.

"Lucina…Morgan…" she murmured softly, and they leaned in closer, gently holding her. "I love you both so much." She squeezed her

eyes shut, then opened them again, tears beginning to well.

"Lucina, I…I need you to get Falchion for me. Morgan…just stay with me, for now." Her daughter nodded lightly, and slowly shifted away to retrieve the holy blade. Her son moved in closer instead, embracing her as she wept.

A few minutes later, her tears dried, Robin grasped the divine dragon's fang in her left hand, shakily moving to press the blade into her right. The tattoo on the back of her hand flared at its touch, and she clenched her eyes shut as she tightened her right hand into a fist. She felt her children place their hands on her shoulders as the holy blade's blue light shone through her eyelids. The sharp pain of a blade in her palm was replaced by burning agony, centred on her tattoo, her Brand, and then-

(*"End executable file."*)

Bahamut pumped a scaly first in exultation as Tiamat laughed in disbelief, the Loop destabilizing once more as their screens piled up with error messages. "Three top-level admins!" he crowed, "And they still can't keep him down! Robin, you're unstoppable!"

"What now, then?" his counterpart asked. "We'll have to report this; an Awake Robin is so destabilizing that there's no way the Loop can go into read-only."

"Send a message up and let them sort it out," he replied. "But append a message from me…"

"'You should give Robin his family back; he isn't going to give up otherwise. Bahamut.' Ugh." Nidhogg made a distinctly un-snakelike grunt as he scrunched the message up.

"Told you so," Sleipnir appended smugly. "Better go ask Dad to fix your mess again."

"Shove it up your cloaca, Sleipnir."

Loki facepalmed with the dread certainty of a top-level administrator. "Time travel!" he snarled beneath his concealing hand. "Why did it have to be time travel!?"

Zeus shrugged casually. "I still think smiting it is the best solution."

"You can't just smite an entire universe willy-nilly, Zeus, as *convenient* as it would be right now."

"Then what *do* we do?" he shot back.

The Rainbow Serpent flicked a forked tongue in and out. " *Let it Loop."*

Loki rubbed his temples in exasperation. "You know what? Fine."

"Temporal safeguards in place?"

"Check."

" *Spatial* safeguards in place?"

"They're the same thing, but check."

"Monitor synchronisation?"

"Ninety-eight percent."

"Fused Loop capacity?"

"Seventy-eight exabytes."

"Meme suppressor?"

"Nuns with axes - I mean, check."

"Very funny. Looks like we're ready to go." Bahamut, the new joint Head of the Reptilian Division, grinned at his partner.

Tiamat smiled back at her fellow Head Administrator. "You did the right thing, Barmy."

"Thanks, Tia."

Pressing the Big Red Button mandated by the higher level administrators, the pair formally Awakened the Fire Emblem Loops.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! Please, leave a review if you have anything to say.

I'm pretty sure someone with more musical talent could fix my horribly mangled meter on that song, but I don't really want to keep messing with it.

Yes, this is where we get both genders of Robin from, in case you were wondering.

If the Rainbow Serpent's interference strikes you as deus ex machina, (*"Good. That's precisely the effect I was going for."*)

Anyway, the opening act is finished, and the Awakening Loops are now open for submissions! PM me with your own snippets of Loops involving Robin and the other Shepherds - I prefer links to something like Google Docs, but raw text is okay too.

See you next time!

Ungulateman

Chapter 3

Validar's cruel grin widened as his band of assassins drew closer to their target. Emmeryn would perish tonight, and there would be nobody to prevent the resurrection of his lord and master. Brandishing his prized Elfire tome, he made his way through the courtyard, his fellow cultists in his wake.

The thieves ahead of him had picked all the locks and silenced the guards; all he needed to do was incinerate the Exalt, snatch the Fire Emblem, and Grima's return was guaranteed. He was not far from his destination, now-

"Father!"

He turned to face the voice, and his eyes bulged in shock as he saw Robin standing there casually, as if this were a friendly meeting rather than an assassination attempt. A woman with uneasily familiar cobalt hair stood by him, and her younger sister(?) as well. "What!?" he snarled in confusion.

"Well, Father, I heard you were coming to Ylisstol, so I thought you'd like to meet my wife," his son answered. He gestured to the woman. "This is Lucina. I'm sorry I didn't tell you about the marriage earlier, but trying to contact you when you're part of an underground cult trying to resurrect an evil god is hard."

"It's an honour to meet you, sir," she said politely.

Robin gestured to the girl, younger than 'Lucina' but certainly not young enough to be her child. "And this is Morgan, our daughter. Morgan, say hello to your grandfather!"

She waved cheerily. "Hi grandpa!"

"I… *what* ?" he stuttered, utterly baffled by this turn of events.

Taking him by the hand, his son proceeded to lead him out of the castle. "Come on, Father, we have so much to talk about! Wouldn't you rather spend time with your family than trying to awaken the Fell Dragon?"

He looked around, noticing the contingent of Shepherds suddenly surrounding his band of assassins. "…I don't suppose I have a choice in the matter."

Robin's smile shifted into something vaguely predatory. "Whatever gave you that idea, Father?"

"That could have gone worse," Lucina commented, as the happy family retired for the night. "I thought Chrom was going to have a heart attack when you introduced them, though."

Robin was too busy writing in his diary. "Note: Validar is allergic to rhubarb…" he muttered to himself as he scribbled away.

"Was Mother Awake, or did she just want to make Chrom a pie like normal?"

'Pinging' the Loop with his Anchor abilities, Robin shook his head. "It's just us this Loop. I'm pretty sure she'll be one of the next ones to start Looping, though." He paused. "That raises an interesting question, actually. I've seen Chrom marry other women in some Loops, and I'm pretty sure he was Awake for some of them. I'll have to ask him about it."

Lucina's expression darkened. "He did, did he?"

Robin didn't even look up. "Lucy, stabbing your father won't achieve anything."

"It'll make me feel better," she said bitterly.

"Ooh, can I stab him?" Morgan asked excitedly. "Grandfather paradox! Grandfather paradox!"

Lucina looked distinctly unimpressed with her father as he stared at the ground, umming and ah-ing away. "I'm not mad, Father - Mother might be, but I'm not. I just want to know why."

"Well," he began cautiously, "I didn't understand the Loops at all until Robin explained them to me, and so I thought it was all a dream of some sort. I didn't know if my first life was real, or whether that life *then* was, so I was in kind of a funk. I married a few different women, more to see what would happen than anything else. I'm not proud, but…" he trailed off weakly.

Lucina stood in thought for a moment. "Were they happy?"

"…Yes, they were. You were, too; no matter who your mother was, you loved each other very much."

She sighed, then smiled tiredly. "Then that's good enough for me, Father. Just…be careful about telling Sumia, okay?"

He looked aside. "I'm more worried about what I'll tell the others."

"Father," she replied in exasperation, "they won't remember. They weren't Awake."

"Alright, alright!" he said, chuckling lightly. "I'm not as good at this whole time travel thing as you are, Lucina."

"YAAAAAAH!" came a sudden cry as Morgan flung herself at her grandfather, practice sword in hand.

1.3

When she Awoke and her internal narrative started using female pronouns, Robin knew something was up.

"Robin? That is you, isn't it?" Chrom asked, noticeably Awake.

"For gods' sake," she spat, fully aware of the irony, " *Bahamut! Tiamat!* Explain what in the hells is going on!"

"Well, this whole pseudo-stability thing was originally intended to adapt the timeline so it didn't matter who married who," Bahamut began.

"And it's still working even during the Loops, as you may have noticed," Tiamat added.

"But it seems to have more profound effects on you, Robin. Our current hypothesis is that when Loki and the other higher-ups altered your gender, the universe simply considered this another pseudo-stable possibility."

"And so now your gender is a pseudo-stable variable, and we're *nowhere near* qualified to try and alter something as important and central as the pseudo-stability of the Loop. When we do, well, *you* happen."

Robin just aggressively kneaded her forehead with the palm of her hand until her face turned red.

Chrom was a courageous man, a generous man, even a heroic man. Chrom was not a smart man.

"For what it's worth, Robin, I'm still not opposed to anything you and Lucina decide to, uh…" he said.

"The last time I was a woman, Chrom, Lucina was my *daughter* . So while I greatly appreciate your understanding, I think I will refrain."

Chrom paused, brow furrowed in thought. "If Lucina was your daughter…then…oh, gods, *what?* "

1.4

Robin did his customary 'ping' of the Loop as he Awoke, and the single response was an unfamiliar one. His heart sank a little. He'd

been lucky recently, with a relatively long string of Loops with Lucina being Awake, but the life of an Anchor was often a lonely one.

Still, it seemed there was a new Looper, whether it was an outsider Fusing in or one of the other Shepherds. He frowned behind his closed eyes; who would it be, and where would they be, he wondered? He hoped it wasn't Tiki or Say'ri; he'd never get to them in time before they altered the Loop irrevocably, and not necessarily for the better.

"Chrom, what's going on? What's Robin doing here?"

"You know this man, Lissa?"

"Know him? Chrom, he's your best friend! Don't tell me *you* have amnesia, now!"

Robin smiled; it was the kind of smile only three women in the world could make him do. "Lissa, calm down, and give me a minute to explain," he whispered fervently. He turned to his not-Awake (Sleeping, perhaps?) father-in-law and his lieutenant, and switched to his formal voice. "Prince Chrom, Sir Frederick, I'm afraid I can't fully explain what's going on here, but I do have something of utmost importance to tell the princess. Would you be so kind as to give us some privacy?"

She blinked a little at his suddenly refined exterior, then nodded. "Yeah, I'd like that. C'mon, Chrom, Frederick, give us some space!"

Chrom looked warily at the strange man, back to Lissa's determined expression, then shrugged. "Well, if she's alright with it," he replied. They walked away, though Frederick's eyes remained locked on the pair.

"Robin!" Lissa hissed, lightly striking him across the chest, more to see if he was physically there than out of any sense of grievance. "What's going on?"

He chuckled in response. "That, Lissa, is a *very* good question, and one with a *very* poor answer."

"Ugh, I am never going to wrap my head around this," Lissa moaned.

"I won't deny that it's complex, Lissa," Robin said soothingly, "But it will make more sense once you get used to it."

Robin looked over to Frederick, who was staring at him like he was contagious. Had he overheard some of the nonsensical-sounding explanation of the Loops? With a shark-like grin, he called out "How's your poster of the Prince coming along, Sir Frederick? Surely there are better uses of an unclothed picture of Chrom than recruiting new Shepherds!"

Lissa snorted.

1.5

Morgan fished a pair of sunglasses out of what seemed like nowhere and turned to face the gathered Shepherds.

"Yo dawg. I heard you like travelling through time, so I travelled in time to meet my mother who travelled in time so that we could travel through time while we travelled through time!"

1.6

Severa Awoke among the ruins.

They'd sheltered in the burnt-out shell of an old granary, her memories told her, while another set screamed at her that they'd already travelled back and prevented this gods-forsaken mess and *where was Mother, Mother I need you* -

Breathing heavily, the redhead shot upright, her ever-present scowl failing to squeeze away the tears. Her mother was *gone* . She was

going to get her *back* . Any thoughts to the contrary were pointless, idealistic nonsense or overly emotional garbage she didn't have time for.

"Lucina?" she quietly called out, knowing she was near her when they'd fallen asleep.

"Mmm…" came the mumbled response as the cobalt-haired princess of Ylisse managed to rouse herself. "What is it, Severa?"

"When are we going to perform the rite? I've…I've been having nightmares about it, I think, and I want to get it over and done with."

"Tomorrow, Severa. We need to be cautious; Grima's still looking for us, even if he lost our trail."

She sighed. "Okay, Lucina. And…thanks for everything."

"Mmm…no problem, Severa. Now go get some rest - we leave at dawn."

Robin rubbed her sore shoulder with a wince on her face as Severa raged incoherently, clearly dissatisfied with her explanation of events. "This is *bullshit* !" she yelled, slapping at the material of the tent they were privately talking in. "You mean everything I did, everything I ever will do, it'll just get *overwritten* like a lazy scribe's scratchings? I *cannot* believe this!"

"The important thing, Severa, is that *you* remember what happened. Maybe your achievements will be lost, but you still *did them* , and that is what counts - not what other people see, but what you see in yourself."

She'd had this talk with a few people now - Inigo had taken it as 'a second chance with all those girls who rebuffed me!', and Brady merely saw it as 'another reason life sucks, but 'ey, beats the alternative, don't it?'. Ultimately, the future children took it all much the same way their parents did; poorly.

Severa sighed, and Robin flinched at the all-too-familiar memories of her as his daughter, listening to that sigh she'd inherited from Cordelia. "I suppose. It's just hard, that's all. Constantly being compared to Mother, and now I get to enjoy people treating me like that *all the time* ."

"Well…" she paused, retrieving a tome from thin air - well, her subspace pocket, but the visual result was much the same - "There are ways of keeping things in between Loops…"

Severa looked up at the suddenly *there* book Robin was holding, and an evil little smile formed on her face. "There are, are there?"

1.6

Rook to B6. "I know you're not Virion."

Pawn to C7. "Is that so?"

Knight to B5. "Don't act coy. I'm the Anchor, and you've Fused in without bothering to announce yourself. I don't appreciate that."

Pawn to F5. "I find in my line of work, announcing who I am and when I've arrived tends to leave me at a disadvantage."

Queen to C1. "That's not ominous at all."

The man guised as Virion paused, hand hovering above the chess board. "It's a rare day, Robin, when I find myself wanting to *not* be ominous. It's all part of the villainous repertoire."

Robin frowned, her brow furrowed as she took in the flow and pace of the game before her. "Enlighten me, then. I'm still wet behind the ears, by Looper standards; who *are* you?"

He smiled, took a knight he hadn't moved for seven turns, and checkmated her. "That was a good game. Perhaps, next time - and I hope there is a next time - if you can beat me, I'll tell you."

1.7

Robin tossed the 3DS XL at the wall of his apartment's bedroom, growling in frustration. "Fuck."

Lucina popped her head in through the door frame, tittering lightly. "Darling, no getting mad at video games."

He slumped, gaze to the floor, as she walked in to sit next to him. "It's just…it's *stupid* , alright? The Risen on the Northroad were nowhere *near* that threatening…"

Lifting his chin with a finger, his fiancé sighed. "Dear, it's called 'Lunatic' for a reason. You may be a master tactician, but you're not a madman, either."

He grunted. "I might be, once this game's through with me." Then he snorted lightly, cupping her chin in his hand. "But you'd love me anyway." A quick kiss. "I don't know what I did to deserve you, Lucy."

"You don't need to *deserve* me, Robin," she whispered back, her arms around him. "Love isn't about *worthiness* or *earning* . I love you, and you love me, and *nothing* can change that."

(The Rainbow Serpent sat impassively, the eternal observer of the pantheon. Hub loops were always an interesting experience. Some Loopers went out of their way to berate - or in some cases, thank - their creators, but Robin was happy to try and live a normal-seeming life.)

(He *was* remarkably bad at Fire Emblem, though.)

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! Please, leave a review if you have anything to say.

University started! I started playing M:tG again! I had a crisis of faith about the viability of fanfic as an artistic medium! Then I remembered that I write this stuff for fun, not because I feel obliged to or because I'm trying to express some deep, artistic meaning in my writing. So that's a good summary of why I haven't been updating.

I'm still going to be watching you write bad fanfic, though. Judging you, and every action you take. On the other hand, if you're writing good fanfic (and that's an oxymoron if I've ever heard it), send it to me so I can include it in the next chapter of the Awakening loops.

Until next time!

Unguateman